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Engl. Hist. Top: vol 3

SOME
CUSTOMS
CONSIDER'D,

Whether Prejudicial to the
Health of this CITY;

And if they are,
Whether we may not hope
to have them Reformed.

It is manifestly much more adviseable to keep off the Invasion of a Pestilence, than to stand its violent and fatal Shocks; and Self-Preservation, as well as the Example of other wise People, admonishes us to use all possible Endeavours to keep it from us, and guard ourselves against it, while at a Distance.

Dr. Hodges's Loimologia, p. 205.



L O N D O N.

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CUSTOMS

COMMISSIONER

Office of the

Board of the City

And it is the duty

of the Board to see that the laws are enforced

and that the public interest is protected



and that the public interest is protected

and that the public interest is protected

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S O M E
C U S T O M S
C O N S I D E R ' D,

*Whether prejudicial to the
Health of this CITY.*



THE dreadful Spread the
Plague has for some time
made in *France*, has just-
ly alarm'd all these Parts
of the World, to stand
upon their guard, and to prevent, as
far as possibly they can, the bringing
that Calamity amongst them, by any
corresponding with the infected Places.

THIS Precaution is as necessary for *England*, as any other part of *Europe*: for by that clandestine Trade which some ill Persons carry on in the *Mediterranean*, we seem as near the Danger of the Infection, as any of those Countries that lie betwixt them and us, upon the Coast and Continent.

THE Consideration of our Danger has so far alarm'd us, that proper Care has been taken both in a Religious way, *viz.* by Fasting and Prayer; and in a Political way, by enjoining the keeping Quarentines, and giving renewed Orders for cleaning of our Streets.

* Dr. *Mead's* Dedication of his Discourse to the honourable *James Craggs* Esq; late Secretary of State.

P. 20,

* A N D at the Signification of the Pleasure of the Lords-Justices in His Majesty's Absence, Dr. *Mead* has given Advices for the Publick Security, in his Discourse of Pestilential Contagion, and the Methods to be used to prevent it; and there he tells us, That he does not look on the Plague to be a Native here, but the Growth of the Eastern

Eastern and Southern Parts of the P. 5.
 World, and transmitted from thence
 into these colder Climates by way of
 Commerce ; and therefore Contagions
 from Abroad, brought over to us, have
 prov'd less malignant here, by our Air P. 6.
 not being disposed to receive such Im-
 pressions.

Y E T, he says, there is in every
 Air a greater Disposition to receive In-
 fection at one time than at another ;
 and that we found it so in the great
 Calamity, when the Plague raged with
 so much Fury, in *London*, in the Year
 1665.

N O W what has been, may be ;
 and the whole Nation has express'd
 their Apprehension of the Greatness of
 our present Danger, in the late Day
 of Humiliation, which was so solemnly
 and universally observed, as has had no
 Parallel in our Day.

M A Y the same Religious, Politi-
 cal, and Civil Methods for our Prefer-
 vation

vation be continued, with the utmost Care and Diligence; and may the Blessing of Heaven (without which all the rest can avail us nothing) make all successful, to the preserving of us free from that awful Judgment.

WE have many Advantages in this City above others, that do in great measure contribute as Means to the Health of it: As a good Air and Soil, and one of the noblest Rivers in the World, which runs between the City and Suburbs, from one end of the Town to the other; which River by the Strength of its Current, and the Flux and Reflux of the Sea, carries away prodigious Quantities of the Filth of the Town, that are emptied into it through the Common-Shores, which are washed by a deal of the waste Water of the new River, that passeth through them.

THESE are Advantages for the keeping the City clean and healthful; but yet there are some Things that deserve

serve to be inspected, and seem to require, that Care should be taken lest they prove prejudicial to us.

A M O N G S T all the Books and Papers written of late about the Plague, our Danger of it, and Preservatives against it ; there is no mention made of what is here suggested we may be endanger'd by. That others have said nothing of it, must proceed either from their having been Strangers to the Matter of Fact, or that they had overlook'd it, or that they thought it not worthy of their notice.

B U T of what Importance it is, is here referr'd to all to judge, especially to those who are best able effectually to remove, what may in that Case endanger us.

I T is well known, that several Out-Parishes of this City and Liberties are very much straiten'd for Room to bury their Dead ; and that to remedy in part that Inconvenience, they dig in their
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Church-yards, or other annexed Burial-Places, large Holes or Pits, in which they put many of the Bodies of those, whose Friends are not able to pay for better Graves; and then those Pits or Holes (called the Poor's Holes) once opened, are not cover'd, till fill'd with such dead Bodies: Thus it is in St. *Martin's*, St. *James's*, and St. *Giles's* in the *Fields*, and other Places.

NASTINESS is a great Source of Infection, and the Air being corrupted by noisome Smells, a Pestilential Venom may consequently receive additional Strength by such Means. The worst of Stenches are those that arise from dead Bodies; and of them, those from Human Bodies are the worst of all. The Stench of a mortified Limb upon a Body yet living, or any cancer'd Part of such a Body, is very offensive: What then must the Stench of so many Human Corpses be? Some of which, perhaps, died of very bad and malignant Diseases, and it may be, were corrupted before they were

were put into those Holes ; and then lie so long there corrupting uncover'd.

Dr. *Quincy*, in his Essay of the different Causes of Pestilential Diseases, annexed to Dr. *Hodges's* Account of the Plague of *London*, says, That one Cause of the Plague is charg'd upon the Streams and Exhalations that arise from putrefying Bodies ; and that it has been often observed, that the Plague has soon appear'd after great Slaughter of Men in Battle ; and those being usually in Summer, the Heats of those Seasons do more dispose to Putrefactions than others.

HE relates also a Passage out of *Ambrose Paris*, of a Plague that laid almost a whole Country waste, which had its Rise from the Stench of a great many Human Carcases that were thrown into one Pit, and left rotting there uncover'd.

NOW then, though we are happy in our Climate, and our Air be not

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so much disposed to receive and entertain Infection, as warmer Climates are ; and so the Force of any Infection brought amongst us, may be abated, and that Contagion lessened : yet if we should be so unhappy, as to have Infection brought amongst us, how might the Air from the Stench and Putrefaction of so many dead Bodies as lie rotting in those Holes or Pits uncover'd, be disposed to receive that Infection, and also heighten, strengthen, and aggravate that Contagion ?

H O W noisome the Stench is, that arises from these Holes so stow'd with dead Bodies, especially in sultry Seasons, and after Rain ; one may appeal to all who approach them, especially to those who have had the sorrowful Occasion to stand over them, or near them, whilst the Bodies of any of their Relations or Friends were committed to those dreadful Places.

T H E R E is something so barbarous and shocking to Human Nature
in

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in this Custom, that one would wonder how it ever came to be taken up at the first, and much more that it should be so long continued. The treating of those Bodies in such a different way from all the rest that lie in those Burying-Places, looks like a branding and stigmatizing of them with Ignominy and Disgrace at their Deaths, for some Crimes they had been guilty of in their Lives; and as tho they had been Sinners and Criminals above all the rest of the Parish: which Treatment of them, is as grievous and cutting to their surviving Relations, as their very Death itself.

WHEREAS in Reality there is no other Reason for their being thus distinguished from others in their Burials, but that they died poor, tho perhaps part of their Time they lived plentifully, and served several Parish-Offices reputably, and to Satisfaction.

ARE Scavengers obliged by their Office, and the renewed Orders in their

cleansing the Streets, to remove the Carcases of dead Dogs, Cats, and other Vermine; and shall the dead Bodies of Men and Women, and our Fellow-Christians, lie so long uncovered? And this, if not under the pretended Orders and Regulations of Parishes and their Officers, yet at least by their Connivance.

H O W meanly will Persons be apt to think of that Christian Burial that is given them, if, for so long a time after, they remain without that Burial, which Heathens would not deny them? We charge it upon Papists as a very barbarous Thing, that they will not suffer the Protestants that die amongst them to have any Burials; and is it not a shame, that Protestants, in a Protestant Nation, should for so long a time be hinder'd and deny'd a compleat Burial?

I F this Custom of making these Holes, and thus using of them after the manner we have heard, has been
taken

taken up and continued, because of the want of room in populous Parishes, conveniently to bury their Dead : Why then do not such Parishes enlarge those Burying-Places they have, if that can be done ? Or if not, if that cannot be done, why do they not purchase more Ground, for additional Burying-Places, to those they have already ? as some Parishes have done.

PERHAPS some will say, That if the Poor, whose Burials there are none to pay for, were to be laid in distinct and separate Graves, they would then take up that Ground which others would pay for, and so hinder some Persons of their Dues. Now in these large and populous Parishes we are speaking of, the Profits arising from the many Funerals of the Rich, may be supposed to be so great, that the Burial of the indigent Poor, might be given them without damage to any : But especially if new Burying-Grounds were provided, where the Rich might be accommodated, they
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PERHAPS some will say, That if the Poor, whose Burials there are none to pay for, were to be laid in distinct and separate Graves, they would then take up that Ground which others would pay for, and so hinder some Persons of their Dues. Now in these large and populous Parishes we are speaking of, the Profits arising from the many Funerals of the Rich, may be supposed to be so great, that the Burial of the indigent Poor, might be given them without damage to any : But especially if new Burying-Grounds were provided, where the Rich might be accommodated, they
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would give any Rates, rather than be buried in crowded Church-yards.

A N D till such Accommodations could be had, if Graves were to be made so deep, as that the next Course of Corpses were to be buried over the other; a Church-yard of a narrow Compass would be equivalent in its use, to one twice as large: and by this means might be prevented the breaking open Graves and dead Bodies, so soon as to endanger the Living; as is too often done.

B U T if all that has been said, cannot persuade the Heads and leading Persons in Parishes to be willing to have the use of those Holes or Pits to cease, for the Poor's sake; I hope they will, upon due Consideration, be prevailed upon to consent to it, and promote it for their own sakes, and their Families, and for the common Safety and Health of this City.

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BESIDES what has been offer'd already to Consideration, which so much concerns the Health of this City, there is another thing that deserves some Examination, *viz.* Whether the Air and Health of this City may not suffer some prejudice from the Steams that may issue from the many Vaults where so many dead Bodies are lodged, especially those that are under our Churches. Nothing, says Dr. *Mead*, approaches so near to the first P. 41. Original of Contagion, as Air pent up, loaded with Damps, and corrupted with the Filthiness that proceeds from Animal Bodies.

IT is from an Apprehension of Danger from the Steams of those Vaults, when they are to be open'd to bury in them, that it is the Custom to make Fires in them, and to continue them till the time of the intended Funerals.

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P. 42. I T is a surprizing Story that Dr. *Mead* tells us from *Cambden*, That at the Black Affize at *Oxford*, 1577, the Judges, Gentry, and almost all that were present, to the number of 300, were kill'd by a poisonous Steam, that some thought broke forth from the Earth : But he says, as my Lord *Verulam* more justly supposed, that that Steam was what the Prisoners brought with them out of the Goal into the Court, it being observed that they alone were not injured by it.

M A Y not the Vaults mentioned, at their Opening, send forth noxious Steams? And may not those Persons imployed in the opening of them, bring that with them which may be prejudicial to others, tho they themselves may suffer no Inconvenience, being accustom'd to it in their being so often imploy'd amongst the Dead.

P. 39. Dr. *Mead* speaking of putting a Stop to the Plague when discovered, and taking

taking care of the Sick, &c. says, No manner of Compassion and Care shou'd be wanting to the Diseased, &c. and all Expences should be pay'd by the Publick, and no Charges ought to be thought great, which are counterbalanced by the saving a Nation from the greatest of Calamities. And is not the Argument of as great or greater Force, what ought to be done in all manner of rational Methods, for the preventing that Calamity coming amongst us? if that be the Will of God. No Charges ought to be thought great, if we may hope to have them counterbalanced with such a Preservation: And therefore, if the Removal of any of those things that have been mentioned, that we may be in danger from, could not be done without damage to some Particulars, it is hoped the Publick will readily bear that Charge which will redound to the Publick Good.

THE whole of this Affair is humbly represented and referr'd to the

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Honourable House of Commons now assembled in Parliament, heartily praying that they will take Cognizance of it, who are the best Judges, both of what may endanger us, and what Methods are best to be taken for our common Safety and Security.

T H E Nation is very sensible what Steps they have already taken for our Preservation from Infection, by the Provision made to oblige to strict Observations of Quarentines; and every one is thence encouraged to hope, that they will still imploy their Wisdom, and utmost Care, to find out and pursue the best Measures, and Methods, for the Preservation of the Health and Happiness of this City; which, if consider'd as consisting of *London* and *Westminster* together, is the largest in *Europe*, and most populous: A City which is the Metropolis and Capital of the Nation, in which our Monarchs have their Residence, our Parliaments are held, our Courts of Judicature are kept; and
where

where so great a Proportion of the Riches, Trade, and Interest of this Kingdom is lodged and managed. It is not to be doubted but that the Representatives of the People of this Kingdom, now assembled in Parliament in this Place, will have the Welfare of it at heart.

A N D for their Direction, Assistance, and Success in all the great Affairs that come before them, that regard the Health, Wealth, Happiness, and Prosperity of this City and Kingdom, they may be assured that many hearty Prayers will be continually put up to the God of Heaven for them.

T H E ready Concurrence of the Honourable Lord-Mayor and Aldermen of this City, is not to be doubted, who have the whole of the Interest of themselves and Families, as it were, embarked in this single Bottom.

F I N I S,

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